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Commission on Human Rights
Fifty-ninth session
17 March-25 April 2003
Item 12 (a) of the provisional agenda**
Integration of the human rights of women and the gender perspective: violence against women

Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women***

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women, which was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995.

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*** The collection and synthesis of up-to-date information from all regions delayed the submission of the present document.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/166 the General Assembly provided the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) with a mandate to strengthen its activities to eliminate violence against women in order to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In doing so, UNIFEM works closely with the relevant agencies of the United Nations as part of its system-wide efforts to eliminate violence against women. With the guidance of resolution 50/166, the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was established in 1996 and became operational in 1997. Since that time, it has continued to identify and support innovative and catalytic projects around the world that aim to break new ground, create new models and mobilize new constituencies in the growing movement to eliminate gender-based violence in all of its manifestations.

2. The present report to the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights documents the activities undertaken by UNIFEM during 2002 to eliminate violence against women.

II. Trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women

3. Through the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, UNIFEM links innovative efforts with opportunities to replicate and scale up successful strategies. The Trust Fund generates lessons and good practices that inform larger programmes of UNIFEM and its governmental, civil society and United Nations partners at the national, regional and global levels.

4. Since the Trust Fund began operation, it has awarded $7.8 million in grants to 147 initiatives in 73 countries. While Trust Fund-supported programmes encompass diverse themes and strategies, a recent overview of grant recipients' activities indicated that the majority of grants had a strong focus on awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, and that the single issue for which initiatives most frequently received support was domestic violence.

5. The Trust Fund continues to experience increases in grant applications. In 2002, more than 260 proposals were submitted, with requests totalling $15.5 million. The growth can be attributed partly to the Fund's greater visibility and growing community of grant recipients. However, the increased demand also points clearly to the Trust Fund's unique character as a funding mechanism in a global context in which gender-based violence continues to be a chronic threat to women's lives and well-being, as well as to the dynamism of the constituency that is responding with national-level initiatives to the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and its five-year review. Donors to the Trust Fund in 2002 included the Governments of Finland, Germany, Italy and Japan. Despite efforts to increase contributions to the Fund, they have remained constant, at about $1 million annually, failing to keep pace with increasing demands placed on resources by groups worldwide.

6. In 2002, members of the Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee for the seventh cycle of the Trust Fund included representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Division for the Advancement of Women and a number of non-governmental organizations. Appraisal Committee members awarded slightly more than $1 million to 18 initiatives in 22 countries. Among the initiatives that will be undertaken through proposals approved in the Trust Fund's seventh cycle are the following:

- In Rwanda the experiences of rape survivors living with HIV/AIDS will be documented to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by these women and to promote protective laws and increased financial support.
- A gender-sensitive media code for journalists will be developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Teachers will be trained in Bolivia to serve as advocates for the inclusion of domestic violence issues in school curricula.
- In Cambodia a series of dramas will be broadcast over national radio to allow audience members to discuss domestic violence and receive referrals for legal and psychological counselling.

7. Recent reports received from those receiving Trust Fund grants in previous cycles demonstrate that the catalytic support provided by the Fund continues to yield concrete results. For example, Algeria's Head of State used findings from a Trust Fund-supported survey conducted in Algeria (and Morocco) in a public statement on International Women's Day to highlight popular misperceptions about domestic violence, and called for the abolition of persistent gender inequalities in Algerian society. In Nigeria, following a programme directed at ending violence against young female hawkers who work in bus and truck stations, a significant drop in reported cases of violence against these women was documented, and the drivers themselves — who had been the main perpetrators of the violence — organized defence committees to protect the hawkers. In Bangladesh, a Trust Fund-supported training manual designed to sensitize law enforcement officials to the needs of women has been used to train more than 400 officers in 12 regions and has led the police to actively seek the assistance of women's non-governmental organizations with specific cases.

8. In 1999, UNIFEM developed a learning component to devise innovative ways of making lessons learned from Trust Fund experiences more accessible, especially for grant recipients, UNIFEM and other United Nations agencies, and Governments. In 2002, learning was supported through the continuation of UNIFEM's "end violence" electronic discussion list, coordinated by the Educational Development Centre. Through the electronic discussion list, an independent film producer learned about the Trust Fund and has now developed a plan and a fund-raising proposal for a four-part television series based on UNIFEM's book *With an End in Sight*, documenting strategies used by Trust Fund grant recipients. In addition, UNIFEM is adapting its Trust Fund strategy to build the capacity of governmental and non-governmental women's organizations and networks in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and to coordinate their efforts to address violence against

women. Building on lessons learned from five years of Trust Fund grants, UNIFEM brought partners from those countries together to collectively design priorities and processes for capacity-building grants in the four countries. The consultations resulted in collective prioritization of urgent areas of action. The Trust Fund will be supporting collaborative project proposals generated through this process in 2003.

9. Finally, continuing the Trust Fund's efforts to enhance communications and advocacy strategies, UNIFEM completed the project "A world free of violence against women: telling our stories, working for change", with support from the United Nations Foundation. The project facilitated the creation of an electronic database of posters, public service announcements and other audio and visual materials that are now in the public domain and available to groups that are launching media and awareness campaigns. The project also supported UNIFEM in the design of a workshop on strategic communications to end violence against women, which brought Trust Fund grant recipients and UNIFEM staff together at six workshops held in all regions during 2001 and 2002. To reinforce skills developed through the workshops, UNIFEM provided small grants to participants to implement the communication strategies developed during the training. These grants were utilized for projects in such areas as encouraging the implementation of legislation to end gender-based violence, raising awareness and rallying support for existing advocacy efforts, and creating organization-wide communication strategies. In Yemen, for example, the Women's Affairs Support Centre built upon existing advocacy work on ending violence against women to encourage parliamentarians to endorse and support the new draft domestic violence bill and policy. The Centre created information kits for all parliamentarians, as well as press materials and media advisories, to encourage popular support for the bill. In East Africa, Equity Tanzania used its small grant to create a network of law enforcement officers and media to work closely together to educate the public about the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act and to monitor the cases filed in court. The media publicized court cases, describing the kinds of judgements passed and the problems encountered by both survivors and law enforcers. In this way, the project helped to promote accountability on the part of law enforcement, and the general public gained greater awareness of the law and the kinds of protection it can provide. In Central and Eastern Europe, where subregional networks developed commitments to work together, the grants were awarded to three groups collaborating on a region-wide campaign for the 16 days of activism against violence against women, focused on men's involvement.

III. Scaling up strategies to end violence against women

10. In addition to the Trust Fund, UNIFEM addressed the issue of violence against women by supporting larger programmes focused on strengthening integrated responses to violence against women, increasing research and data to better understand the causes and prevalence of violence, building capacity to formulate and implement effective legislation and policies, strengthening regional action and learning, and continuing strategies to build awareness among policy makers and the public about the urgency of ending this pandemic. In this work, strategic partnerships with other agencies — particularly UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNHCR, WHO and OHCHR — are critical.

11. UNIFEM's work to strengthen integrated responses to violence against women in Latin America links community, provincial and national-level initiatives. UNIFEM is supporting Brazil's State Secretariat for Human Rights in the piloting of a Women's Reference Centre in the 100,000-inhabitant shantytown of Complexo da Maré. Women who come to the centre are linked with comprehensive and integrated services through a network of governmental and non-governmental providers. In Ecuador, UNIFEM is supporting the development of a provincial plan on violence against women, spearheaded by the municipality of Guayaquil, and is contributing to the decentralized processes leading up to the development of the national plan on violence against women through Ecuador's National Council for Women (CONAMU). An inter-institutional committee has been formed to develop the plan, consisting of the Mayor, a Councilwoman, UNIFEM, UNFPA, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/WHO, UNICEF, Oxfam and CONAMU.

12. In South Asia, UNIFEM support has focused on responding to domestic violence and traditional practices, as well as addressing trafficking in women and children. Zonta International has continued its support for a wide-ranging collaboration coordinated by UNIFEM in India to address violence against women through three integrated components: (a) compiling and making available resource directories on existing resources for survivors of violence against women so as to improve networking and access to services, (b) building alliances with men and (c) conducting legal literacy workshops. In 2002, directories for five Indian states were made available online on the UNIFEM web site, and by the first quarter of 2003 the project will have mapped support services for survivors of violence in 13 states. UNIFEM is also supporting the Department of Sociology at Delhi University in the piloting of a seminar on the topic "Theorizing masculinities". This new course is a first step in curriculum development on the issue and will provide a model for teaching about gender issues and developing educational materials on related issues at other institutions. Follow-up to research conducted at Delhi University has resulted in (a) a successful photo exhibition at the India International Centre exploring notions of gender, sexuality and violence in the spaces that men occupy and (b) travelling seminars at various universities in the country, conducted by a well-known independent filmmaker.

13. UNIFEM-supported efforts to increase research and data aimed at a better understanding of the causes and prevalence of violence have resulted in the availability, for the first time, of comparable data on violence against women for nine countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The study — undertaken through surveys and focus groups supported by UNIFEM in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan — pointed to the fact that women suffer higher levels of violence than men across the region, and also to differences in men's and women's understanding of the nature and complexity of violence. This data will be used by UNIFEM and disseminated to partners to underpin the design of programmes and advocacy strategies. In Latin America, UNIFEM is collaborating with the International Centre for Research on Women, PAHO and the Inter-American Development Bank to support a comparative analysis of public expenditures to inform and stimulate the implementation of policies or laws designed to address violence against women. The study is focusing on Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Chile. UNIFEM is also working as a partner with the Economic Commission for Latin

America and the Caribbean and other United Nations agencies to gather a core set of common indicators on gender, including specific indicators on gender-based violence.

14. UNIFEM's work in the area of women, peace and security is also yielding new information and insights into the violence that women experience in conflict and post-conflict situations. The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building, published by UNIFEM in 2002, highlights the gender-specific impacts of war and armed conflict on women and offers a comprehensive set of recommendations related to strengthening protection and assistance for women affected by war. UNDP, UNHCR and UNFPA, which, together with other United Nations agencies, collaborated in the preparation of the book, are working closely with UNIFEM to ensure its widespread distribution.

15. To build capacities to formulate and implement effective legislation, policies and plans to end violence against women, UNIFEM supported a number of regional initiatives in 2002, including a consultation involving 70 participants from Asia. UNIFEM worked in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Government of Malaysia to bring representatives of governmental and non-governmental agencies from 16 countries to the workshop, the theme of which was "Strengthening partnerships for eliminating gender-based violence". The gathering was important for strengthening regional cooperation, especially on the issues of monitoring implementation of government plans and migrant women workers.

16. In CIS, UNIFEM is currently completing a year-long regional advocacy campaign entitled "A life free of violence — it is our right". The campaign has organized public-awareness and capacity-building activities in eight countries of CIS and Lithuania, as well as regional meetings. The campaign has resulted in the creation of networks of lawyers and national task forces on ending violence against women in the nine countries involved. The campaign has also supported the existing networks of crisis centres in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan by promoting their work and providing resource materials to be used in their activities. Partnerships between Governments and non-governmental organizations and other actors has been strengthened through the work of national task forces, which includes joint actions and sharing resources within and between countries and between non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

IV. Assessing regional initiatives on the elimination of violence against women

17. To support the development of UNIFEM's and its partners' strategic approach to this issue, the organization undertook the second phase of a global assessment on ending violence in 2002. Findings and analysis from the assessment are being used as the basis for a chapter on ending violence against women in *Progress of the World's Women 2002*, vol. II. The second phase of the assessment was designed to generate information to broaden UNIFEM's and partners' understanding of work in this area, and to make it possible to devise improved strategies, focuses and alliances to end gender-based violence worldwide. During the first stage of the assessment, a global desk review of UNIFEM projects since 1997 was conducted, examining strategies, issues, budgets and partners.

18. The second stage of the assessment consisted of 10 regional scans, which situated UNIFEM's work in the context of the broader environment of initiatives to end gender-based violence. It identified key areas of progress, including the formulation of legislation and national plans to end violence against women in a growing number of countries; the expanding influence of media and advocacy strategies and campaigns to raise awareness about gender-based violence; and a growing body of research and methodologies to track the prevalence, nature and costs of violence. Additionally, real innovation in confronting gender-based violence at the community level shows great promise in demonstrating successful strategies that can be scaled up to inform national and regional strategies and programmes. In-depth case studies of initiatives to end violence are also now being conducted in a number of the regions where UNIFEM works.

19. Initial assessment findings are already providing guidance for UNIFEM programmes. Among the key issues emerging from the assessment, on the basis of reviews conducted by experts in each of the geographic regions where UNIFEM works, the following will shape the future of UNIFEM's assistance:

- While significant progress has been achieved in creating or strengthening legislation and national plans to end violence against women, all regions reported that implementation lags far behind commitments. Legislation and national plans must be matched with appropriate and adequately funded measures to ensure implementation.

- Women's organizations and networks, through advocacy and service provision, have been playing a leading role in efforts to end violence against women and strengthen recognition of gender-based violence as a violation of women's human rights. These organizations will require significantly more funding and capacity to meet growing demands. At the same time, as violence against women is a pandemic of enormous proportions, meaningful progress on ending it cannot be achieved without government and other mainstream actors (especially in the health care, law enforcement and judicial sectors) taking full responsibility for prevention, treatment and care.

- Data to track and monitor prevalence and other aspects of violence against women is critically needed to influence policies and programming.

- Coordination, synergy and opportunities for sharing strategies remain insufficient, especially at the regional level. Enhanced regional networks have the potential to increase the effectiveness of legislative initiatives and ensure the sharing of lessons learned and the replication of successful strategies. While regional networks of both governmental and non-governmental actors working to end gender-based violence exist, greater investment and focus are needed to strengthen them and ensure their sustainability.

V. Conclusion

20. In paragraph 6 of the Millennium Declaration, world leaders endorsed the view that "Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children ... free from the fear of violence" (see General Assembly resolution 55/2). Violence against women remains a global pandemic and, as the rising demand for and results of Trust Fund support demonstrate, the commitment and creativity of groups

worldwide to address and eradicate it continue to grow. Over the past 10 years, UNIFEM has been increasing its support for and experience in programming in this area. It remains committed to increasingly focusing its work through ongoing coordination with diverse partners, mobilizing political and financial support for innovative strategies and linking these innovations to opportunities to scale up and mainstream successful efforts aimed at addressing violence against women in all of its forms.